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ABSTRACT

Children of the Blackfeet Indians in Montana have experienced many forms of white education in the past 140 years. The Jesuits began instruction there in 1837, building St. Peter's Mission in 1859. The mission school provided academic, vocational, and moral training for boys and, later, for girls. The first government public day school was established on the reservation in 1872 at the Four Persons Agency. The usual day school curriculum included sewing, housework, carpentry, and blacksmithing. Evolving in the 1880's as a way to absorb Indians into the white civilization, government boarding schools used strict military discipline and separation from family to change the Indians' beliefs and attitudes. In 1892 the first government boarding school on the Blackfeet reservation began operation. As on-reservation schools became more popular, off-reservation schools became more specialized and began to emphasize progressive academic achievement. Most boarding schools were supplanted by the public schools which appeared on the reservation in 1906 and flourished during the 1930's. Currently, most education for Blackfeet children is concentrated in the Browning area, where overcrowding is a serious problem. A history of reservation school funding sources is included along with maps, photographs, and interviews of former students. (SB)

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The Educational Movement of the Blackfeet Indians 1840-1979

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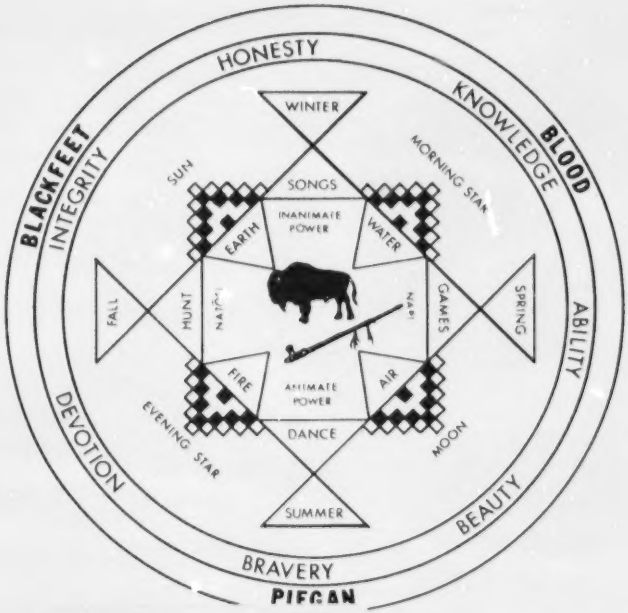

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Edited by Roxanne DeMarce.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to all of the Blackfeet People, for we are the ones that have gone through all of the trials and tribulations that warranted this publication.

The Educational Movement of the Blackfeet Indians 1840-1979

Written by Jackie Parsons

Illustrated by Don Parsons

Blackfeet Heritage Program, Browning, Montana

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TRIBUTES

I wish to thank the many people here on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation who took the time to unlock their hearts and lead me through the past to the present, giving me the encouragement to write the history of the "Educational Movement of the Blackfeet People."

Iliff McKay	Cecile Trombley
Louise Pepion Evans	Dolly Stone
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Tom Thompson	Geneva Fisher
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All of the ladies at Mainstream

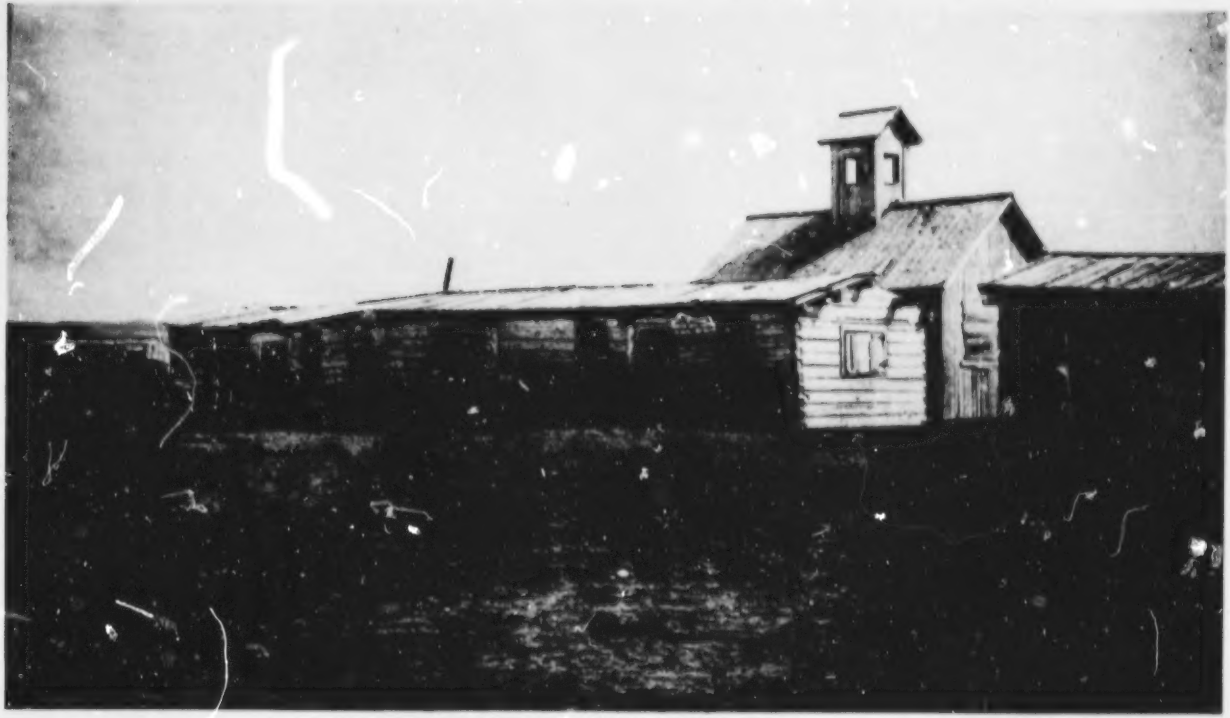
A special thank you to my family who have the understanding to see me through my endeavors.

FORWARD

EDUCATION—What is the meaning of education? To most people, education signifies the acquisition of knowledge In the early days, when the mighty redman was being conquered, education had a very different meaning. To the Indian, it meant being defiled by a race of people that initially set foot in the North American continent in order to flee anarchy. Yet they imposed on the red race a far greater injustice than they themselves had ever suffered in their former country. If the different races could accept people for what they are and not intimidate them into thinking they are sub-human, they would find that every race in the world has something genuine and unique to offer. In the case of the Indian people, they had the highest form of democracy ever practiced. They had a remarkable sense of responsibility to their children. A child, at a very early age, was taught profound fundamentals of life — the men teaching the boys, the women teaching the girls. They lived hand in hand with nature, knowing how to survice in their surroundings.

This ability to survive should have been evident to the pilgrims the first winter they lived in this country since it was the Indian who kept them from perishing. The following spring, it was the Indian who led them with open hearts, in the teaching of survival. Once the whiteman established roots in this seemingly 'Garden of Eden', their greed took over. The great redman, the educator during the early years of settlement, was to be repaid by the whiteman by their intense effort to exterminate the Indian. Bounties were paid for every man, woman and child that was killed. Soldiers marched into Indian villages and camps, massacring everything that moved. All this murder was to no avail since Indian tribes populated the whole North American continent. Treaties were than made with the Indians, most of them not worth the paper that they

were written on since few were ratified by the whiteman's government. It was then that the whiteman's efforts turned from extermination to education, or should we say, "Indoctrination".



Holy Family Mission Cabins

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MISSION SCHOOLS

As the white settlers moved across this vast country pioneering the land, the powerful Blackfeet people were the last to be suppressed. They were not defeated by the whiteman, but by the deadly disease, smallpox. In 1836, smallpox was carried to the Blackfeet camps. Approximately one third of the population died. They were to be struck by this unseen executioner twice more, reducing their normal number of approximately eighteen thousand persons to less then six thousand. During this time, when the natives were confused and felt defeated by something they had no way of fighting, the Jesuit priests began their missionary work with the Blackfeet Indians in 1837.

Although it was a time of tribulation for the Blackfeet, the Jesuits' initial attempt to start their missionary work was not accepted in the Indian domain. It was not until three years later, in 1840, that the Jesuit priests were allowed to stay thus beginning their work as catechists. They were named Black Robes because of the long black flowing robes they wore. The zealous spirit the Black Robes possessed was to bring about the first formal education of the Blackfeet. Although they lived among the Blackfeet teaching catechism and English, their desire was for a more lasting and stable development. Their goal was to establish a mission for these perplexed and defeated people, giving them stability for the inevitable future.

In 1859, the first mission was constructed near the present town of Choteau, Montana. Three log cabins were erected, called St. Peter's Mission, under the direction of Father A. Hoechen. This mission school continued until 1862. Then a more suitable location was selected above the mouth of the Sun River, and the new St. Peter's Mission was established. For various reasons, this mission was to be moved twice more. The final sight was chosen and a

large stone building was erected in 1879, with Brother Robert Hamilton as its staff.

It was difficult to dispense education during this time due to two facets of the Blackfeet culture: the nomadic life-style of the Indian and the desire not to be far from loved ones.

During this early period only boys were taught at St. Peter's Mission. In 1884, the Ursuline Order of nuns arrived at St. Peter's Mission and girls were immediately initiated into the educational program. The United States government, through contracts with St. Peter's Mission, paid part of the Indian students' tuition. This amounted to nine dollars a month per pupil. This amount was paid for thirty students, since the government felt that it was partially responsible for educating the Indian. In succeeding years, the enrollment grew to two hundred students for whom the government continued to pay the nine dollars per pupil. It was also necessary to transport Blackfeet students to the St. Ignatius Mission on the Flathead Reservation during the disastrous starvation winter of 1883-1884. This was the beginning of the end for the Blackfeet people. It was the year that the Blackfeet realized there were no more buffalo and that they were completely dependent on the government for their mere existance. Hundreds of Blackfeet died of starvation during this winter. The few children that managed to escape this catastrophe were students either at St. Peter's Mission or at St. Ignatius Mission.

The training received at these early mission schools consisted of one half day academic, and one half day vocational and spiritual. During these harsh bitter years, St. Peter's once again faced a problem with its location. An act of congress on April 15, 1874 moved the southern boundary of the Blackfeet Reservation to Birch Creek. This cost the Blackfeet millions of acres of prime land, and left St. Peter's approximately sixty miles outside of the reservation boundaries. With the center of the Black-

feet Reservation so removed from St. Peter's, in 1881 Father Peter Prando built a mission station on the south bank of Birch Creek, just outside the southern boundary of the reservation. This was done in order to continue their work with the Blackfeet people until a permanent site could be settled.

In 1887, Chief White Calf contributed land for a mission to be built on the Two Medicine River. This was to be the only permanent mission ever built on the Blackfeet Reservation. The original funding for this mission was $15,000, donated by the Misses Drexed of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Two stone buildings were erected, serving as a boys' and girls' dormitory with classrooms in each building. The outlying areas consisted of barns, chicken houses and work sheds. With the completion of a lovely church building, the mission was finished in 1890 with one hundred student enrolled. It was named the Holy Family Mission. The course of study continued to be one half day academic, and one half day vocational with liberal application of religious and moral instruction. This mission was to serve the Blackfeet for thirty-six years.

It needs to be understood that in the early years of mission schooling, the Blackfeet people accepted the teaching of the Jesuits. They gave stability by the consistancy in their services. The Black Robes were working with these humble, ravaged people as true missionaries. The missionaries received no pay and were completely dependent upon donations to maintain the school, with no personal gain except spiritual fulfillment.

The same children returned year after year, enabling them to receive an eighth grade diploma. These graduates provided the Blackfeet with intelligent leadership for this time period. An eighth grade education was considered a great asset, and even more so when you consider the educational level of Indian at that time. In the pages that proceed, are some interviews with the senior Black-

feet members that attended the early schools. These interviews give insight to times when these people were floundering in a broken society under heavy pressure to make radical changes in their way of life. They may give today's society a chance to look into the past and understand the feelings of these people — a people who were taken sometime by force, sometimes by necessity, but seldom by personal desire.

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St. Peter's Mission

Holy Family Mission Cabins

INTERVIEWS

These are statements made from personal interviews with some of the senior members of the Blackfeet Tribe that attended the early schools.

MARY GROUND—"I attended Fort Shaw, St. Peter's Mission and the Holy Family Mission. It took three or four days of travel to get to St. Peter's and Fort Shaw. Fort Shaw was a boarding school that the children attended for nine months of the year. St. Peter's Mission you attended the full year. You were not allowed to go home during the time you were attending these two schools since it was so far to travel and you had to travel by team and wagon. You went to school in the morning until dinner time, then back to school until 4:00 P.M. in the afternoon. You started with the ABC's, learning to write and speak English at the same time. School was from grade one through grade five. There was no such thing as graduation. A lot of children quit, some to get married, very few went to college or away to school. Schools were good. You didn't waste time. They took care of the children. You had three good meals a day and a clean place to sleep. I worked in the kitchen and bakery. The children didn't mind working. They would have had to work at home. The boys brought in the wood and the vegeables. They milked the cows and brought the milk to the girls who strained it. It was churned by hand to make butter. You had to obey. The good students were never punished. If you were bad you were locked up and given bread and water. Your hands were paddled. The girls and boys couldn't play together. The girls' building had a high fence. The boys and girls had to sit on different sides of the church. Boys and girls were always on opposite sides of the room, no mingling at all. Families brought their children to school of their own free will. You could talk Indian, but not much. I had plenty to eat. They were the happiest days of my life."

MARY LITTLE BULL—"The mission school was pretty strict. The school had a high fence around it. You were not allowed to look at the boys. When you went to church you were separated, the boys on one side, the girls on the other side. You could not mingle with each other or sit together. The Mother Nun would sit way in back and watch that no one was fooling around and kept an eye on them to see that they weren't looking at each other. It was good that the missionaries were strict. It was true that life was very hard, that is why people listened to the missionaries. They went by what they preached and that is why the nuns and priests were listened to. You were punished by getting a whipping, that was all, or they made you stand in the corner. You could not wear any clothes except the ones they gave you to wear."

GEORGE BREMNER—"If you got caught looking at the girls you had to write. I stayed two years. We could not go home for holidays. You could not even look at the cook. The mission was subsidized by the government. Father Sawyer used to recruit kids to go to school. He had an old bay horse. We had plenty to eat. They were the happiest days of my life."

LES COBELL—"Lou Olliver broke the mission. He worked for J. L. Sherburne. He managed the mission. Hugh Black bought the horses after it was mortgaged and the mission went broke."

LIZZIE HENDERSON—"George _____ had a looking glass in church to watch girls in the choir. Five hundred Hail Mary's if you were caught. There was a high board fence around the boys' building. You did not get to go home for holidays. You went from the fall to the summer. The families of the children would camp in the brush and the kids would visit them on holidays. The boys' punishment was worse then the girls'. The boys were strapped for running away. You had to stay in bed for a week."

JAMES LITTLE DOG—"When I first went to school, I don' know what year it was but I begged to go to school. I was about ten years old. I could understand English a little bit, but not much. I couldn't spell or read. The boys that I went to school with helped me a little bit, but not much. The school was pretty strict. The teachers were always watching you. I never learned my ABC's. They started teaching me how to read and learn how to count numbers. I was doing pretty good. At the time I thought it was pretty hard. I always thought if I had been taught how to say my ABC's it might have been easier for me to spell. I was kind of slow in school, but I tried my best. After I went to the boarding school I started running away, then stayed out of school. I have found out that school is one of the best things for young people. They will have no trouble getting a job. That is one of the things that I am truly sorry for, that I did not keep going to school. My biggest handicap today is I don't understand some of them high words they use. I always think, I wish I had another chance to go to school. Now I pity myself. I am old and hard of hearing. Today I am turning to the Lord. He hears me when I am talking to him. I ask for our young people to try their best to be educated so they will understand."

LAWRENCE HORN—"I attended the government day school at Heart Butte. Every time you spoke Indian you got a stroke of the leather strap and it had holes in it. It was one room and had a male teacher. It was grade one to grade three. There was big sheets that turned like maps. There was no Indian books for the ABC's. I talked Indian and English both in the home. I went to Browning until I almost graduated then I went Chemowa. I had to take most things over again. It was a vocational school with academic courses. I took auto-mechanics. In 1932, it was no longer a military trained government school. They had different trades you could take like farming, carpentry, plumbing, commercial, auto-mechanics, machinists and home economics.

The senior girls had practice houses where they made their own budgets, planned menus, cooked, planned meals for guests, etc. You were not punished for speaking Indian."

AL EVANS—"I enrolled to go to Chemowa Indian School. I was bashful and shy when I got to Chemowa. The first day they had me in the center of the dining room. It seemed everyone was looking at me. It rained and rained. I had a wet feeling all day and got sick. I was in the hospital with nice white clean sheets. The girls and nurses worked in the hospital. I stayed there four years. I didn't even go home for vacation. I went South to California where I had in my mind to learn and study art. I worked part time to earn money to pay for the art school. I spent four years there. I received a certificate. That means the words in art school, you have finished your ABC's. I did not get a master's degree."

LUCY McKNIGHT—One of the most revered persons on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation, who is now deceased, made a statement about the mission schools: "The mission schools taught our children how to live life with what they had and to always have hope for a better future."

NUMBER OF BLACKFEET INDIANS WHO HAVE ATTENDED HOLY FAMILY MISSION

Degree of Blood	Male	Female	Total
Full	38	55	93
¾-full	35	30	65
½-¾	50	67	117
¼-½	45	33	78
Less than ¼	17	23	40
	185	208	393

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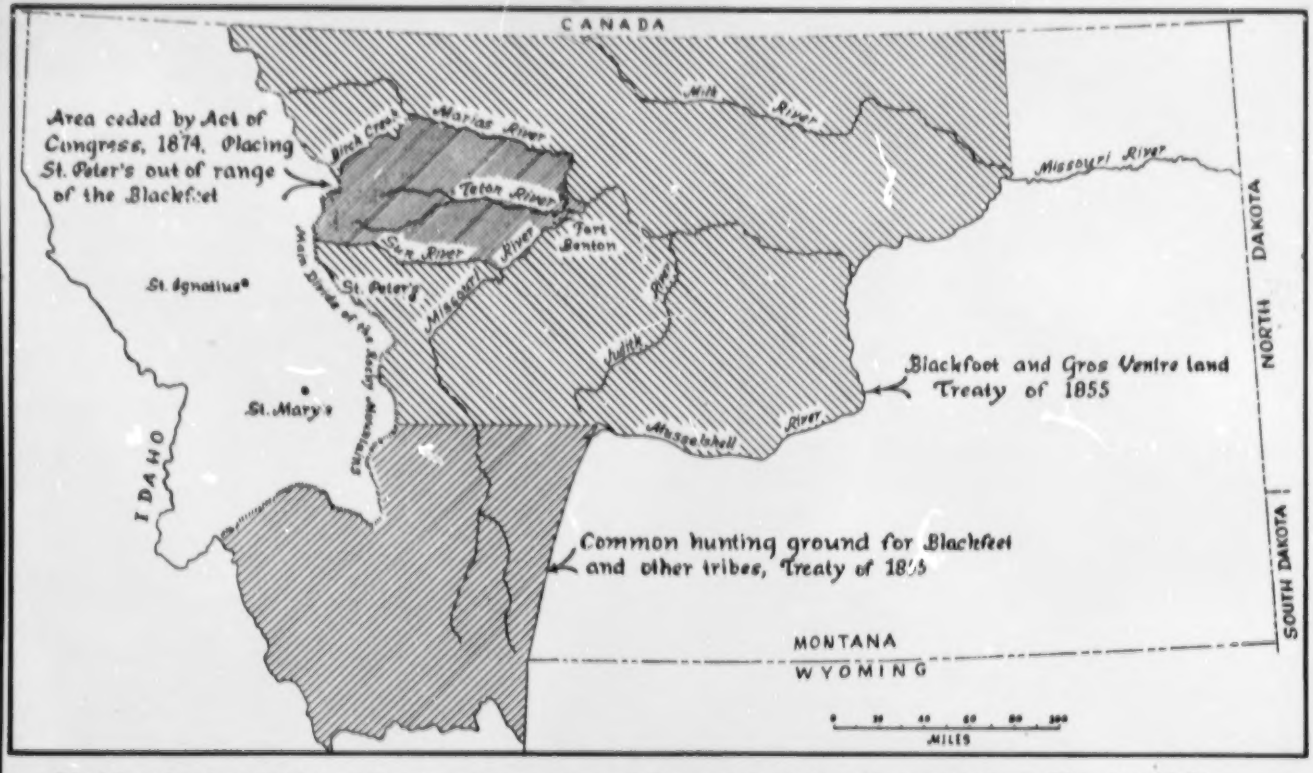
St. Peter's Missions four locations. First location, 1859, near present Choteau. Second location, 1860, near Fort Shaw. Third location, 1862, near Ulm. Fourth location, 1866, near Bird Tail Rock. Based on a map in L. B. Palladino, S. J., *Indian and White in the Northwest.*



Blackfoot lands, 1855-74, with approximate sites of Roman Catholic mission stations. The site of St. Peter's shown here is the fourth location of this mission. It was west of the present town of Cascade, Montana, and the ruins are still visible. Based on a map in John C. Ewers, *The Blackfeet.*

RESERVATION DAY SCHOOLS

In the early years of education for the Blackfeet, the fact that the mission schools were the most important facet of education for the people cannot be disputed. In those difficult times, it was the Black Robes that were to lead the way for the government to initiate different types of schooling for those confused people. They lived directly with the Blackfeet people and had the sensitivity and insight to read the signs of the times.

At this time, whiskey traders were taking over the Blackfeet both physically and culturally. The traders stole their horses, which were the Blackfeets' only material goods that they had to trade with the whiteman, took their land and then had their main food source slaughtered for the hides (used for belts to run machines for industries). Their whole world completely collapsed around them. Their life-style after hundreds of generations was wiped out. Would they become so dependent upon the government that they would be unable to help themselves learn to survive the new culture that was being forced upon them without empathy? Would it ever be on the conscience of the white people to see the Indian after being so degraded, physically, morally and spiritually, having destroyed their entire culture, leaving them to linger like ghosts over this mighty country? The total distruction of their life-style contributed to the downfall of the Indian civilization as it was known at that time.

In 1872, it became apparent that there was an urgent need for more than one approach to educate the Indian. The first public day school for the Blackfeet was opened at the Four Persons Agency near the present town of Choteau, Montana for twenty-six students. This school was opened for Indian children, but the Indian people refused to sent their children to school until the white child was integrated into this system also. The initial enrollment consisted of ten full-bloods, six half-breeds

and ten white students. Due to the nomadic lifestyle of the Indian, attendence was sporadic. The Indian children that did attend school for a regular period of time would then move with the parent to better hunting grounds. Upon their return to school, most of them would have forgotten what they had previously learned. These first attempts to educate the Indian were difficult since the Blackfeet people did not accept control and had no faith in the whiteman's educational efforts. In 1876, this school was abandoned for various reasons. The major reason being poor attendence and the teacher, B. W. Sanders, was unable to complete the school year. At this point, it is easy to recognize the fact that the government was not able to furnish the Indian with the stability or consistency which they so greatly needed.

After the agency moved to Badger Creek in 1877, school was once again opened. Reports for that year indicated some success, especially in the teaching of English. A new curriculum was set up in 1878, which included arithmetic and sewing. Attendence seemed to be getting better and the children started showing a genuine interest in school. Regular day school was held at the agency for the next few years with the curriculum varying, but it did include reading, writing, arithmetic, sewing, personal grooming, housework, farming, carpentry and blacksmithing. This educational movement occured through President Ulysses A. Grant's peace policy for Indians. Under his declaration, the government would feed the Indians instead of fight them. In lieu of exterminating the Indian, they would seek to lead them in the ways of peace through education.

For the next several years, the government's attempts to educate the Blackfeet could not be considered successful since only eleven percent of the school age children living on the reservation were enrolled in school. Under President Grant's Indian peace policy, the different tribes were parceled out to the different denominations for education.

The Blackfeet were issued to the Protestant establishment, with no consideration for the previous missionary work done by the Jesuits. During this era, the Methodist Church appropriated no funds for educational work for the Blackfeet. The agent at that time was Methodist and this accounted for the day school that was held each day on the agency under his direction.

Low salaries and harsh working conditions did not attract qualified personnel. Under these conditions, President Grant's goals to educate the Indian fell extremely short of his original proposal. Therefore, the Blackfeet did not find the stability needed to convey education to the people on the reservation until the Catholics opened the Holy Family Mission in 1890.

GOVERNMENT BOARDING SCHOOLS

The 1880's were an important era of education for the Blackfeet people. From this period the concept of the Government Boarding School was developed along with programs planned for a long range permance. Agent Wood made these observations earlier in his monthly report dated September 25, 1875: "A boarding school is the only practical method in which to inculcate and ingress the minds of the coming generation with the superiority of civilized over the uncouth and precarious course of life in the wigwam." The idea of placing Indian children in new surroundings, in off-reservation government boarding schools, would hasten the absorption of the white civilization. By the seperating of children from their parental influence, it was hoped that they could change their attitudes and beliefs through strict and regimented military-style discipline. Due to this factor, children were picked up on the reservation and shipped to the government boarding school, many times without parental consent.

Although other government schools were in existence, the Blackfeet had not yet been sent to other off-reservation schools up to this time. The concept of goverment boarding schools did not become a reality for the Blackfeet until 1889, when forty-five Piegans were sent to Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Government boarding school were then to become a major trust in the development of Indian education.

Fort Shaw, a former military post, was converted into a government school in 1892, with sixty Piegan children enrolled. This school was then the closest government school to the reservation and was located near the Sun River. Also in 1892, the first government boarding school opened on the Blackfeet Reservation. This was the Willow Creek School, located west of the present town of Browning, with an original enrollment of twelve. By the

end of the first quarter, enrollment totaled ninety-one students, and after the completion of the second quarter, the school reached its capacity of one hundred and one pupils.

The reservation schools were still not as successful as the off-reservation schools as attendance problems continued to plague the system. This was due to the close proximity to their homes. Therefore, they still seemed negative to these whiteman values. John C. Ewer, in his book, **The Blackfeet,** summed up the problems in two sentences: "The work of civilizing Indian children required much more than constant drill in the three R's. It required painstaking indoctrination in the basic fundamentals of the whiteman's culture." Although all government schools had basically the same curriculum-academic training, domestic work in private homes, training in agriculture and mechanical arts — again John C. Ewers makes another strong point that to the Indain child, "learning to be civilized meant learning a host of little things — to comb one's hair, to wear a coat, trousers, and shoes, to sit in a chair, to sleep in a bed, to use a knife and fork, to tell time, and much more".

The more popular the reservation schools became, the more the white culture off-reservation schools became closed or re-organized into special curriculum schools. Some of these schools were Chemawa, Oregon; Haskell Institute, Lawrence, Kansas; Flandreau, South Dakota; and Pierre, South Dakota. These schools developed a different philosophy of education. A student had to show a satisfactory and progressively higher achievement level with a specified number of credits to graduate, with special emphasis still put on vocational training. Over the years, for no known reason, there seemed to be great fluctuation in the enrollment of the Blackfeet into these off-reservation schools.

There was to be one more significant change in the history of the reservation government boarding

school located at Willow Creek. The site was moved to the Cut Bank Creek area, about six miles northeast of Browning after a fire destroyed the dormitories. In 1906, the Cut Bank Boarding School was opened with the same curriculum offered as before for grades one through eight; one half day academic and one half day vocational.

For various reasons, this school was closed for four years, 1934-1938, but due to the many complaints by the local people, it was re-opened in 1938 and continued as a boarding school until 1956. The Public School System was then emphasized at this time, therefore the boarding school was transformed into a boarding dormitory, for one hundred and sixty students, these children were now bused into Browning Public Schools.

Thus was the end of an era of the reservation boarding school and also the start of a full incorporation of the public school system on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation.

The government boarding schools still being utilized by the Blackfeet Indians today are: Flandreau, South Dakota; Chemawa, Oregon; Haskell Institute, Lawrence, Kansas; Busby, Montana; Pierre, South Dakota and Intermountain, Utah.

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Chemowa Indian Boarding School

Boys Home, Government Indian School, Genoa Neb.

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Girls dormitory, U.S. Indian School, Genoa, Neb.

Cut Bank Indian Boarding School

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Genoa Basketball Team Champions

Graduation 1911 at Genoa, Nebraska. Third from right, top row: Lillie Urien (Blackfeet).

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Public and private schools did not exist on the reservation prior to the 1906 opening of the Cut Bank Boarding School. They received their impetus from the growing number of white children in Browning as it was the new location of the Blackfeet agency. This also created an influex of Indian families in the Browning area. A group of businessmen and the agent traveled to the county seat in Choteau, Montana to meet with the County Commissioners and the County Superintendent of Schools in order to provide education for their children. They were given a receipt of permission to open a school in the town of Browning in 1905. (Up to that time, children had been taught by private tutors at various homes and ranches located on the reservation).

The first public school, a one-room building located near where the water tower in Browning stands today, was opened for twenty students. In 1906, due to the increased number of enrollees, another room was added. With the growth of the town, it was necessary to rent rooms in private homes to accommodate the ever increasing student population. These schools were all primary and later elementary, until 1920, when a new and modern eighteen room brick building was completed to house all twelve grades.

Yet the public schools that were in operation for the Indian children were not enough. Due to the ever increasing population on the whole reservation by both white and Indian and also with the acceptance of the white culture by the Indian, it became necessary to construct rural schools.

Also during the same year, to compensate for weather conditions and rural existence, public schools started operating at various locations on the reservation. These schools operated intermittently on account of teacher loss, weather conditions and family transiency. The classes were held mostly in

the home of the family or the nearest neighbor, subsidized, in part, by whatever the families contributed: money, butter, eggs, meat, etc. In the early twenties, there were at least fourteen rural schools operating on the reservation.

In 1933, a major portion of the government day schools were built under the public work administration grants. There were twelve of these schools built on the reservation, which served the Blackfeet people for many years. Of these rural schools, there are three still in operation today: Starr School, Babb and Heart Butte.

Even though finances, weather conditions, poor roads and teacher shortages greatly handicapped education, these many rural schools in some small way assured the children of some type of training. The curriculum still consisted of courses in the three R's and whatever unique talent the teacher may have possessed.

Eventually these rural schools were to disappear under the re-organization of counties and school districts. Year by year with the withdrawal of federal participation in funding rural schools, the larger rural schools were turned over to district management. The rural schools remained a continuous struggle, financially as well as academically. As the years passed, the need for consolidation became more evident. With the advent of better roads and better transportation, the rural schools was fast becoming something of the past. Of course, this caused a heavy influx to the four that remained: Babb, Heart Butte, Croff-Wren and Starr.

The Browning schools eventually became the heart of education for the reservation. The expansion was sudden and inadequate: from the one-room school in 1906 to a new eighteen-room brick building in 1920, and then a new addition in 1936, under the Works Progress Administration. As the years progressed and acceptance of the white culture became evident, so did the realization of education.

In 1936, the first two full-blooded Blackfeet Indians to graduate from Browning High School were Robert Westwolf and William Spotted Eagle. With the heavy increase in reservation population after the war years, it was again necessary to enlarge the school facilities. In 1953, a new high school was built and was occupied in 1954. However, the Browning schools were still approximately twenty classrooms short. Immediate plans were made for another school. This was to become the K. W. Bergan school which would service grades Kindergarten through grade three. By the time this school was ready to be occuppied, it too was inadequate. Again plans were re-opened for another new school. Before this school could begin to be constructed, an apparent population explosion on the reservation made it necessary for children to be shifted to the K. W. Bergan school. In 1966, five portable classrooms had to be purchased under Title I, Public Law #89-10, in order to accommodate the heavy enrollment. The Vina Chattin building was completed in 1967 for grades four, five and six. This should have taken care of the problem but did not. By 1969, the Catholic Center had to be rented. This building had six classrooms and was used for the fifth grade only.

The great increase in population also affected the other reservation schools. Starr had to convert their school to serve grades one through three only. The other grades were bused into the Browning Public School. Babb, East Glacier and Heart Butte schools had additions built in order to take care of the ever increasing population. In 1972, a new Junior High School began construction. The school was not occupied until 1974, with a gym built in 1976. Also in April of 1972, Babb (School District #8) annexed with Browning School District #9, purely for economic reasons.

As of April 1975, the area still showed School District #9 with approximately four hundred unhoused students. The rated capacity for the Browning Public Schools is 1,376 pupils. For the past five years,

Browning School District #9 was still overcrowded by 795 students per year, which is approximatly forty classrooms short of the needed amount to accommodate the reservation student population. This includes the twenty percent of students attending off-reservation schools.

The education of the Blackfeet people seems to be in an ever-critical situation. With the threat of closure of off-reservation boarding schools, the coming of industry and the decentralization of cities, this can only mean one thing for the Blackfeet people: PROGRESS. Through progress, the people will attain the highest degree of education while still preserving the unique Blackfeet Indian Heritage.

Heavy Breast School, school year 1923 or 1924

SCHOOLS ON THE BLACKFEET INDIAN RESERVATION

Mission Schools

In the year 1859, the first mission school was opened for the Blackfeet Indians near Choteau, Montana which was reservation land at that time. Three log cabins were erected and called the St. Peters Mission. (This was the first St. Peters Mission). The site was abandoned in 1862 and moved to a more suitable location, at the mouth of the Sun River. It was called the new St. Peters Mission. Up to this time, educational efforts were centered around vocational and spiritaul teachings. The first formal educational effort began in 1879 at the new St. Peters Mission, which had been moved again, but remained on the Sun River. The reason for moving this site again was because of entensive fire damages to the buildings. Rather than rebuild, it was decided to move the site and enlarge the school. In 1884, the Ursuline Nuns arrived at St. Peters Mission and the girls were immediately initiated to education. Blackfeet students were to continue attending this school until it closed.

In the year 1883, a small one room mission school was opened at Robare, Only a few Indian children were taught due to the fact that they had to sneak across the Birch Creek River to be taught by the Catholic Priests. At this time the agent for the Blackfeet was a Protestant and had the Jesuits or Catholics ordered from the reservation. This small mission was built and a few children that came to the Priests were taught.

In 1887, Chief Whitecalf contributed land to the Jesuit Priests to build a mission school for the Blackfeet. This school was built and opened in 1890, on the Two Medicine River, for 100 students, ages 6-15 years of age. It closed in December, 1939.

Government Boarding Shools
On The Blackfeet Reservation

In 1892, the Willow Creek School, a government boarding school opened for 101 students. This school operated continuously until a fire destroyed the school and the site was moved to Cut Bank Creek.

In 1904, the Cut Bank Creek Boarding School was opened for 125 students. This school operated until 1934, when it closed for a period of four years. The reason for closure of this school, the Bureau was trying to phase out and shift the responsibility to the Public School District. This school was re-opened in the school year 1937-38, due to pressure from the local public. At this time it is still operating, but strictly as a boarding dormitory.

Government Day Schools

The first government day schools opened in 1915, they were at Heart Butte, Old Agnecy and Starr. These are the only three rural schools still operating today on the reservation.

Croff, Chief All Over, Higgins, Fisher Flats, Mad Plume, Durham, Coldfeet, Swims Under, Upper Birch Creek, Little Badger, Heavy Breast and Camp #9 opened in 1933, under the Public Work Administration Grants. These smaller schools were to phase out with the advent of better roads, consolidating with the larger rural schools. As funding of these schools were turned over to district management, economically it was not feasible to continue operating these small rural schools. It was more economical to bus these children, to the larger remaining day schools or into Browning.

Public and Private Schools
On the Blackfeet Reservation

The first public school pened at Four Persons Agency at Choteau, Montana, for 26 students, in 1872-1876. This school closed because of poor attendance.

Altyn, opened in 1898, for white children only: Altyn was a silver and copper mining boom town, located in the Babb Valley. It existed until 1900, when a new school was built on the St. Mary River and called the Babb School. A new site was chosen and a school built in 1939. This school is still operating, but annexed with school District #9, in 1972.

The first public school opened in Browning in 1905, for 20 students. Due to the increase in enrollment another room was added the following year. This did not take care of the heavy enrollment and the school was taught in rented buildings until 1910, when a new school was built. This school was considered too great an expense to the district and was moved to the present site of the elementary school and later used as a dormitory. In 1920, the new Browning school opened at the present site of the elementary school and housed all twelve grades. Mr. Douglas Gold was the first Superintendent. In 1936, a new addition was added to the school under the WPA. A new high school was completed in 1954, housing grades 9-12. In 1956, the K. W. Bergan School was completed for grades K-3. In 1966 five portable classrooms were rented for grade 2. In 1967, the Vina Chattin School was completed for grades 4-6. Because of the heavy enrollment of the district they had to rent the Catholic Center for grade 5. In 1974, a new Junior High School was completed and started operation, with a gym addition in 1976.

The old Babb School, New Babb School, Camp # 9, Carway, Hiltons, Galbreath, Peskan, Dubray,

Kraft, St. Mary, DeWolfe, Burd, Paisly, Cut Finger, Pontresina, Heavy Runner, Blackfeet, Croff-Wren, Big Lake, Reevis, Mad Plume, Seville and Hamilton were the public and private schools that opened on the reservation. These schools were to open and close intermittently due to weather conditions, teacher shortage, family transiency and funding.

These schools housed grades 1-8. If a student was to continue his education, he either had to go to a government boarding school, off the reservation, the family had to move into Browning, or the student had to board with relatives or live at the Browning Boarding Dormitory. Since the flood in 1964, approximately 25% of the reservation population had to relocate. This relocation was in or near the town of Browning.

Today's Schools
On The Blackfeet Reservation

From the numerous schools that once existed on the Blackfeet Reservation, we see only four of these schools operating today: Babb, Heart Butte, Starr, and Browning.

The Babb School has approximately forty students enrolled, grades K-8. Grades seven and eight have their choice of attending school at Babb or busing into the Browning School.

Heart Butte is operating for grades K-8, and have students attending.

Starr is operating for grades 1-4 and have approximately 35 students attending. In 1974, the original school that was built in 1915, was condemned and destroyed in May of 1976. Four trailers now house the students at Starr. A headstart and Kindergarten building was constructed in 1969.

Browning is the backbone for education on the Blackfeet Reservation at this time. The Browning

Schools service 2,150 students, K-12. The system is now running buses to every part of the reservation. This is not only more economical to have the students centralized but it gives the student a chance to compete scholastically, since he is in a group with his peers. This system also give the student a chance to participate in extra-curricular activities, exposing him to a broader sense of values. The Browning system today is a Class A, credit school system.

Off-Reservation Government Schools Attended By The Blackfeet Indians

*Genoa, Nebraska	First Blackfeet attended this school in the early 1890's.
Carlisle, Pennsylvania	First Blackfeet enrolled in 1889.
Flandreau, South Dakota	Opened in 1882, first Blackfeet enrolled in the late 1880's.
Chemawa, Oregon	Opened in 1885, first Blackfeet enrolled in 1899.
Busby, Montana	First Blackfeet enrolled in 1950.
Chilocco, Oklahoma	Date unknown when first Blackfeet enrolled.
Fort Sill, Oklahoma	Date unknown.
Lawton, Oklahoma	Date Unknown.
Haskell, Kansas	Opened in 1884, first Blackfeet enrolled in 1889.
Riverside, Oklahoma	Date Unknown.
Wahpaton, North Dakota	Date Unknown.
Concho, Oklahoma	Date Unknown.

*Because of poor records being kept in the past at these Government Boarding Schools, dates of the Blackfeet first enrolling at these schools were unable to be located.

Pierre, South Dakota	Opened in 1881, first Blackfeet enrolled in the year 1930.
Fort Shaw, Montana	Opened in 1892, with 60 Blackfeet enrolled.
Intermountain, Utah	First Blackfeet enrolled in 1973.

Funding for Public Schools
On The Blackfeet Reservation

1892—First public school opened at Four Persons Agency funded by the United States Government.

1883—Regular day school was opened at Old agency on Badger Creek, funded by United States Government.

1890—The Holy Family Mission was opened on the Two Medicine River, funded in part by the United States Government and public and private donations.

1892—First Government Boarding School opened at Willow Creek, funded by U. S. Government.

1898—First regular school opened at Altyn, strictly for white children funded by individuals.

1905—First public school opened in Browning, funded by state money.

1915—Starr, Heart Butte, Old Agency, funded by the U. S. Government until 1936.

1920—The Blackfeet School funded by state and district monies.

1933—Croff, Chief All Over, Higgins, Fisher Flats, Mad Plume, Durham, Coldfeet, Swims

Under, Upper Birch Creek, Little Badger, Heavy Breast, and Camp #9 opened under the Public Work Administration Grants. They were funded by the U. S. Government, State and District monies.

1934—Johnson O'Malley Act—This act authorized the secretary of the Interior to enter into contracts with the states or territories for the education, medical attention and social welfare of Indains.

1936—Johnson O'Malley Act was ammended and the State of Montana used this money strictly for a hot lunch program for Indian children of ¼ degree Indian that was enrolled and living on a reservation. Although this money was intended for supplemental money to consider the needs of Indian children that were not being met under other Federal Programs. It was not until 1969, under the direction of Mr. Earl Barlow, that this money was taken from the lunch program and used for the purpose it was inacted for. It is now operating under PL 9363, for the purpose of self-determination and for Indian Education.

1964—P. L. 874, a Bureau Program designed to support public educational instruction that serviced children from military installations, since they were non-taxable. The Blackfeet as did other reservations became eligible because of Trust status lands.

1965—1965-1976, ESA Act, Title I-X, this was Bureau money, a supplemental educational program for disadvantaged students. To equalize educational benefits for deprived children who would be educational.

1976—Funding for the Browning Public Schools system was:
58.5%—Federal Money
21.2%—State Money
16.3%—County Money
4.0%—District Money
It cost 5.8 million dollars to operate School District #9 for 1976. The cost to operate the school system will continue to increase, not only because of inflation, but with a projection of a steady increase in enrollment.

1978—1978-1979, expenditures are beginning to stabalize.
29.0%—County Money
39.0%—State Money
30.0%Federal Money
2.0%—Other Money
The cost to operate School District #9 for this year is 4.6 million dollars. The Browning Schools are beginning to show signs of stabalizations due to birth control methods and more attending off-reservation schools.

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EPILOGUE

One could say the Indians' original life-style caused their defeat at the hands of the whiteman since the Blackfeet war tactics depended more on counting coup (touching their enemy) than the actual killing of them. With the Indian out-numbered so drastically and with the whitemans' superior weapons, one could readily see that this would lead to the Indian's eventual defeat.

In reviewing the past one hundred and thirty-nine years, one can see that the Blackfeet people have progressed dynamically. However, one must never forget that the progress has been damaged with much bloodshed, heartache and prejudice, caused mainly by government oppression. And it seems ironic that indoctrination of the Blackfeet through the educational movement would someday reverse the situation.

The venom that forced the Indian people to forget their own culture would be the cure to cause them to rise up again and to see that the treaties made by the government with the Indian will be adhered to.

It is said, "time eases all pain" for the Blackfeet people. Yes, time is easing the pain of losing the culture they once possessed. It is sad that the future generations will be deprived of sharing a way of life that wanted for nothing.

To the Indian people of today and to the coming generations, will they preserve what is left of the beautiful Blackfeet culture, never forgetting the proud race of people that they are descended from? Will they strive for progress and lead their people successfully in the coming generations, through education, the only recognizable peaceful method? These questions, will only be answered in the years to come. Let us hope that through education the next one hundred and thirty-nine years will be peaceful

and prosperous for this proud race of people. That they will find a way of life that is as rewarding as it was when they were first discovered by the whiteman.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jackie Parsons, an enrolled Tribal member and lifelong resident of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation, lives on a ranch near Starr School, with her husband Kenneth Parsons and six children.

She has attended Browning Public schools, Chemowa Indian School, Chemowa, Oregon, Haskell Institute, Lawrence, Kansas, Flathead Community College, Northern Montana College and Indian Law Studies, under the National Indian Court Judges Association, Washington D.C. She has worked as a secretary to the Blackfeet Tribe, a Nutrition Technician, Home Economist Specialist, Prosecutor and Blackfeet Tribal Judge. She is now the Executive Director of Northern Plains Indian Crafts, Association, at the Museum of the Northern Plains Indians in Browning, Montana and a Indian Circuit Court Judge.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Don Parsons, who is nineteen years old and the fourth child of Kenneth and Jackie Parsons received his education in the Browning Public School system in Browning, Montana and The Santa Fe, New Mexico Art Institute. From the time he was a small child his main interest in life has been sketching, water colors and oil paintings. He intends to further his education by enrolling in college at Montana State.

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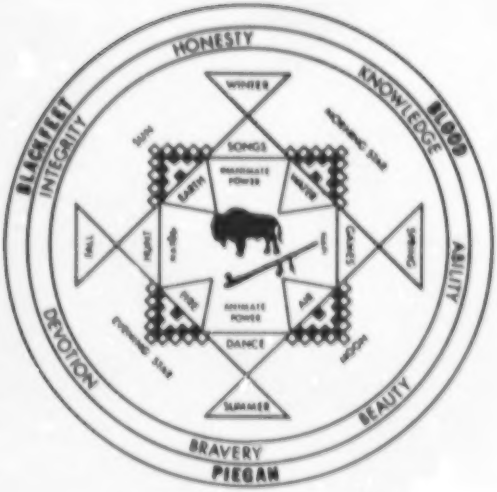
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